

BETTER BOWLING

for

Everyone



by

Joe Wilman

Champion Bowler and
Well-Known Sportswriter



Better Bowling for Everyone

By **JOE WILMAN**
Noted Bowling Writer
and Champion Bowler

INTRODUCTION

Joe Wilman is one of bowling's best known writers in addition to being a championship bowler in his own right. His daily newspaper column, "Strikes and Spares," is carried by many newspapers across the country. In addition to his tournament bowling and writing activities, Joe Wilman runs a series of bowling clinics where instruction and friendly aid is given beginners and experts alike.

In this booklet Joe has written about and illustrated the solution to many of bowling's most common problems. His advice to everyone who wants to be a better bowler is to work on bowling's "big three." They are coordination, concentration, and confidence!



(1) STRENGTHEN YOUR WEAK POINTS

All bowlers have strong points, and they have weak points. It takes an honest bowler to admit his weaknesses, but he'll be a better bowler as a result of it if he practices to strengthen his weak points.

Let a qualified instructor or some other good bowler point out to you your shortcomings. They can spot them quickly. Then, let them also help you overcome them. Work on the shots that give you the most trouble. Practice shooting at the 10-pin or at the splits you face most often.

If your finishing position throws you off-balance, try walking through your approach slowly without the ball. See if you can hold your finishing position as shown in the drawing. You should be able to if your timing is correct.

Most of us like to practice the things we do best and need the least practice on. Face facts. Practice on your weak shots. Correct them. Don't let one mistake breed others in your game.



(2) NEW ALLEYS USUALLY DON'T HOOK MUCH

Here are some bowling tips that might help you correct a flaw in your game:

Not long ago, Junie McMahon, a former All-Star champion, rolled a perfect game with a 15-pound ball. That proves that you can score with a ball lighter than the maximum 16 pounds. Yet many bowlers refuse to admit it if the 16-pounder is too heavy for them. They insist on rolling the heavy ball, though it hampers their armswing and timing.

Your wrist should be firm as you deliver the ball. Your thumb naturally comes out of the ball first, and your fingers come out last. The fingers apply the lift to the ball as shown in the sketch. If you do apply any wrist turn in releasing the ball, don't do it until the ball is *passing* the left foot.

Because new bowling alleys are completely flat, they don't hook as much as older alleys where the ball can settle into a track into the 1-3 pocket.

In playing strange alleys, find the angle from which you can hit the pocket easiest, and *stick with it*. Don't change unless your pocket hits consistently fail to produce strikes.

**THUMB IS RELEASED
FIRST, LEAVING
FINGERS TO PUT ON
HOOK SPIN**



(3) HIGH BACKSWING HURTS TIMING AND BALL ACTION

Many bowlers are guilty of too high a backswing—especially when they first begin bowling. This is particularly true of men who try to overpower the pins with speed instead of letting the ball roll and develop a hooking action.

Watch a good bowler, and you'll notice his backswing is never higher than we show in the drawing—shoulder height.

Former All-Star Champion Connie Schwoegler is a giant of a man—he could put blinding speed on the ball if he desired! Yet, he rolls a medium speed ball, one with plenty of hooking action on it. His backswing is lower than that shown in the sketch.

Besides producing excess speed, too high a backswing also helps ruin timing. It lengthens the arc of the armswing, thus destroying co-ordination between armswing and footwork.

There are easier ways to acquire natural speed without hurting your game. But the important thing is form that's fundamentally correct. That's what produces consistent scores.



(4) LOFTING THE BALL HURTS

Young bowlers in particular are guilty of the bad bowling habit of lofting the ball. This habit, which is illustrated, takes off most of whatever hooking action the bowler has put on the ball. The ball will bounce and skid far down the alley before it begins any rolling or hooking action.

Lofting also affects your direction with the ball. And it can harm the alley, as it causes the ball to bang down too heavily on the wood. When constantly repeated, this banging can cause a bad alley condition.

If a bowler has an exaggerated lifting motion with his hand, that can also cause lofting. You run this risk if your hand is under the ball at delivery as shown in today's sketch. You release the ball with a scooping or shoveling motion.

Not bending the knees as you deliver the ball can also cause you to loft it. You should bend the knees and get down close to the alley, so you can roll the ball—instead of throw it.



(5) EITHER SLICK OR STICKY APPROACHES LEAD TO TROUBLE

I developed the habit years ago of sliding a bit on my left sole each time I step out on the approach. That's to make sure I haven't picked up any moisture or other substance that would hamper my slide to the foul line. I also like to try out the approach at the foul line to make sure it's OK at the finish of my footwork.

Because this slide is so important, I think bowlers should always check the approaches before bowling, too. Try a couple of practice slides to find out if the approaches are a bit sticky or if they are too slick. Just as alleys vary, so do the approaches.

Many times a bowler will pick up a drop of water or chalk or dirt on his sole without knowing it. Then, unless he has the habit of checking his sole each time he bowls, he is in for trouble. The moisture or chalk will stop him short as the illustration today shows. This means a poor delivery if not a foul. Such a short stop can also cause physical trouble to the knee or leg.



(6) OVER-TURNING THE BALL

When a bowler first begins developing a hook ball, he often makes the mistake demonstrated in our illustration—he over-turns the ball. He's so anxious to put stuff on the ball that he turns his wrist much more than necessary.

Over-turning the ball hurts your timing. It can also affect your direction.

A good rule to keep in mind about turning the ball is never turn it until the ball is passing your left foot. That allows you only a fraction of a second to deliver the ball and makes it tough to over-turn it.

Anyway, you can probably develop a hook without any turn at all. Try rolling a hook with a simple finger lift. Always start with a little hook which you can deliver easily and control, and work toward a bigger and stronger hook. Don't begin with the wide-breaking hook you can't control.

Watch out for over-turning the ball. Don't begin your wrist turning movement until the ball is passing the left foot. Be sure first of all, of the fundamentals.



(7) IS YOUR STARTING POSITION TOO NEAR?



If you're finishing too far behind the foul line after your final step and slide, you're probably starting too far back. You shouldn't finish more than about 6 inches behind the foul line, and most bowlers will be even closer. It may be, too, that your steps are too short.

Don't clown around when you're holding a bowling ball. It's too easy to drop the ball and hurt someone or the equipment.

Don't bother a bowler who is getting ready to bowl. And don't distract him, as we show in the sketch. Furthermore, keep away from any bowler on the approach; let him concentrate on his shot.

Here are some further common-sense tips: Never pose too long when you're up on the approach. Wait until the bowler on your right has bowled, then get up and bowl yourself.

(8) IT HELPS TO BOWL WITH BETTER BOWLERS

In your league bowling, you can't always choose the folks with whom you bowl, but when you're in a practice session, try to bowl with a bowler who's better than you.

Why? Because I think a bowler can learn more and perform better if he or she is bowling with a better bowler.

First, a better bowler can help you correct mistakes and flaws in your game. A good bowler can spot the mistakes if you ask for his help. A poor bowler isn't any help in spotting your mistakes, because he can't even help himself.

Second, a good bowler can help you adjust to the alley conditions. A bad bowler probably doesn't even recognize the poor conditions.

Third, bowling with someone better often brings out the competitive touch in each of us. We extend ourselves a bit more. And that's when we improve.

Fourth, you can learn yourself from watching better bowlers. See how they adjust to meet different conditions. See their angles for various spares and splits.

Fifth, you could develop bad habits from bowling with poor bowlers.



(9) CHANGING YOUR ANGLE IS THE EASIEST ADJUSTMENT

In teaching at a recent clinic, I found a bowler whose chief trouble came from hitting the 3-pin instead of the 1-3 pocket. As you can see from the sketch, that won't score a strike for you.

I watched him bowl a few balls before I suggested any changes. Each ball was delivered smoothly and angled out to the right a bit before it hooked back. But each one failed to get back up and into the 1-3 pocket.

I suggested he change his angle by moving a couple of boards to the right. He still rolled his ball out over the same spot, but from his new angle, his ball didn't roll so far out to the right before it began hooking back. As a result, the ball was rolling into the 1-3 pocket fairly consistently, and he began striking more often.

Changing your angle is the easiest adjustment for a bowler to make.



(10) KEEP YOUR HIPS SQUARED TO THE TARGET

I've stressed the importance of keeping your body squared away to your target in your stance, throughout your approach and during your delivery.

Actually, it's very easy for your shoulders to be pulled off line *slightly* during the second or third steps of your approach. We show the top of the backswing as the third step is completed with the right foot. Note how the full backswing has pulled the right shoulder off line just a bit.

This won't affect the bowler if he keeps the hips facing his target squarely. His right shoulder will come back to a parallel line with his left shoulder as he brings the ball forward to deliver it.

For many bowlers, a conscious effort to keep the shoulder perfectly square to the target throughout the second and third steps would reduce the length of the backswing. It would also affect the timing.

So, don't worry if your shoulders aren't completely parallel during the middle steps of your approach. Just make sure they're parallel when you start and when you finish.



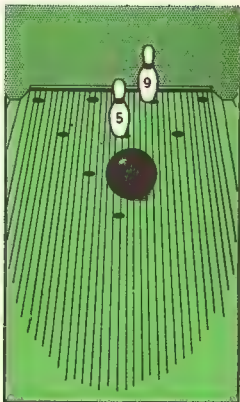
(11) THE 5-9 SPARE IS SIMPLE

This 5-9 spare we illustrate here is a pretty simple looking shot. Doesn't look very tough at all, and it isn't—if you shoot it correctly.

Yet, many bowlers will miss it either by chopping the 5-pin off and leaving the 9-pin standing or by failing to get their ball up enough to hit both pins. The ball will hit the 9 but miss the 5-pin entirely.

I like to shoot this middle-of-the-alley spare from the center of the approach or a bit to the left of center. I roll my ball out slightly to the right so it hooks back into the right side of the 5-pin and continues on back into the 9.

Hitting both pins with the ball is the *sure way* to convert this one. It's possible to turn it in by hitting the 5-pin on the left and knocking it back and into the 9, but never depend upon pin action where you don't have to. Always try to have the ball hit as many pins as possible.



(12) SIGNS OF A DEAD BALL

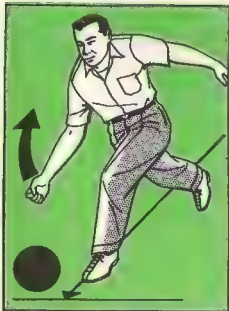
Do you hit the pocket fairly consistently, yet fail to carry your share of strikes? Do you consistently leave the 5-pin on hits that seem to be pretty solid? Do you leave many 8-10 splits on pocket hits?

These are generally signs of a dead ball. Even if you are accurate in hitting the pocket, you won't score well unless your ball has enough stuff on it to continue rolling through the 5-pin instead of deflecting off to the right.

First, check your release. Do you have enough finger lift and/or wrist turn to impart enough stuff to the ball? And, are you putting it on as your ball is passing your left foot at the foul line? Continue your follow-through as well. Don't stop your hand at the point shown in the drawing. Keep it coming up until it's face high.

Next, check your timing. You may be releasing the ball too soon or too late. Either one can affect your ball's action.

Lastly, check your speed. If your ball is hooking too soon due to its slowness, it will go into the pocket flat. Make sure your ball is still hooking when it goes into the pocket.



(13) HERE'S A SYSTEM TO MAKE UP YOUR LINEUP

I know teams that have broken up and friendships that have been ruined because the team captain had trouble selecting the five bowlers who were to bowl each week when six or seven men were on the team.

Here's how my team in Berwyn, Ill., solved this problem. We took our scores from the previous week, and the low scorer sat out the next week. The man who had sat out the previous week was lead-off man. The second-lowest scorer bowled second and so on down the line with the best scorer from one week bowling anchor the next week.

All six team members can get together when they finish bowling, as the group in this drawing, to figure out the next week's lineup.

I think this is one safe and honest way to determine your lineup if you have more than five bowlers available each week.

Even if you bowl under the handicap system, as most leagues do, you can figure out your scores with handicap.



(14) WHAT CAUSES THE STICKY 5-PIN?

What causes the 5-pin to stand on a good pocket hit? That's a question I'm often asked during my instruction clinics.

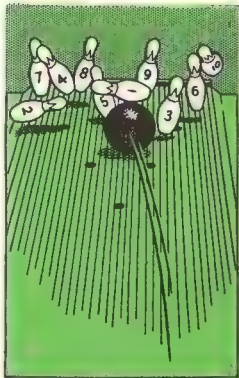
The most common reason for that blamed 5-pin sticking is a first ball that flattens out when it hits the 1-3 pocket. It has lost its hooking action when it hits the pins.

Look at our drawing. See how the ball barrels right into the 1-3 pocket and then continues rolling into the 5-pin. The ball *must* knock down the 5-pin if you are to score a strike. If the ball deflects to the right, it won't touch the 5-pin, and you probably won't score a strike.

If your pocket hit wasn't solid, you might leave the 5-pin even if your ball didn't deflect off. Even a strong, working ball can leave the 5-pin on a thin pocket hit.

To correct a flat ball in the pocket, work on your finger lift or your wrist turn to develop stuff on the ball.

If thin hits plague you, change your angle a board or two to the right to make sure your ball gets up into the pocket more solidly.



(15) DON'T COPY A STAR BOWLER'S STYLE UNLESS . . .



I've given private lessons to bowlers who consciously try to imitate the stars they've watched on television. Some try to roll a big hook with the same style as Bill Lillard, as we show in the sketch.

Many have tried to copy the unusual style which Don Carter has used so successfully. Others mimic Steve Nagy or Buzz Fazio or some other colorful star.

Unless your natural style resembles some star's, I wouldn't recommend your changing over just to mimic some well-known bowler. Sure, you should have the same command of footwork, armswing and timing, but there's no reason to roll a big hook with the form of Bill Lillard which we illustrate unless you can control such a hook. Maybe you can't consistently put that much stuff on the ball.

So, if you're tempted to change your natural style merely to look like some top bowler, don't do it. Any change you make in your game should be for the better. It should improve your scoring. If not, don't make the change.

(16) USE YOUR SAME DELIVERY FOR ALL SHOTS

Many bowlers have so much trouble shooting for the 10-pin in the right corner of the alley, they roll a back-up ball for this difficult spare. Many women, as we show, who roll a straight ball normally will turn their wrist to the right as they deliver the ball so it will roll to the right and into the 10-pin.



I don't recommend it. I think a bowler should use the same type of delivery for *all* shots. If the ball does the same thing each time you roll it, you can shoot for any spare merely by adjusting your angle. The trouble comes when your ball isn't consistent.

If a bowler uses the same delivery each time he rolls the ball, he'll get better and quicker control of that type of delivery.

Be consistent. Use the same armswing, the same footwork and the same delivery. Don't vary your delivery for special shots. Only a few star bowlers will vary, and then only after a lot of practice and work to correct a weakness on certain spares. But for you average bowlers, let me repeat—don't vary.

(17) THE "SLEEPER PIN" MAKES THE 1-2-8 A TOUGH SPARE

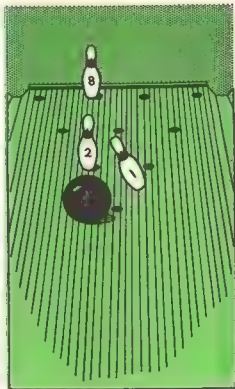
This 1-2-8 spare is a tough one to make because of the "sleeper" pin—the 8-pin which is directly behind the 2.

You draw this spare generally if your first ball went in solidly on the 3-pin and missed the headpin entirely.

When this spare is missed, the ball will usually come in on the head pin's right, and drive it into the 2. The ball, however, will deflect off to the right and miss the 8-pin.

That's why the ball must go into the 1-2 pocket as we show in the drawing. Stand slightly to the right side of the approach, and release the ball to the right-of-center. The ball should angle across the alley and strike the 1-2 pocket solidly. The ball then continues back and into the 8-pin.

With the ball striking all three pins, you can't fail to convert this spare. It can also be converted by hitting the headpin on the right and letting pin action take care of the 8. But the only *sure* way to make this shot is to let the ball strike all three pins.



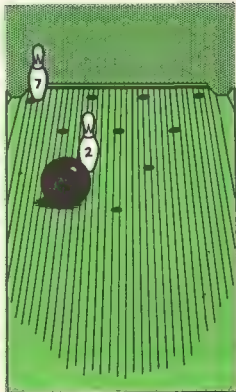
(18) HOW TO CONVERT THE "BABY SPLIT"

The 2-7 "baby split" on the left side, shown in our drawing, is one that a right-handed bowler won't face too often. A left-handed bowler will draw this troublesome split fairly often, however.

A right-hander shoots this left-side spare from the right side. He takes his stance to the right-of-center and releases his ball on that side, too. He angles his ball across the alley so it strikes the 2-pin on the left side. The ball continues on into the 7-pin.

Shooting between the two pins is the best way to convert this split because the ball strikes both pins. You don't have to depend upon pin action at all.

A southpaw bowler will shoot it from the right side, too. He should angle his ball out a bit more toward the 1-pin and allow it to hook back between the two pins. Lefties usually have a more natural hook, and they must allow for the ball's hooking action.



(19) BOWLING COURTESY IS COMMON SENSE



I think bowling courtesy can be summed up in the words "common sense." If a person will just use his common sense in bowling, he will always practice fine bowling courtesy.

Common sense tells you not to damage the alley property. Don't loft your ball. Don't mar the benches or settees. Don't scratch the approaches or alleys.

Common sense tells you not to annoy other bowlers. Don't be too loud or distracting. Don't be a poor sport by always griping about your bad luck or boasting about good scores. Don't give advice unless someone asks for it, and control your temper at all times.

Common sense tells you to bowl within a reasonable length of time. Don't stand out on the approach posing for a minute or two...or waiting until bowlers on all sides have finished, as our demonstrator is doing in the sketch. Be ready to bowl when it's your turn. Don't make teammates hunt for you.

(20) STRIKE ANGLES VARY

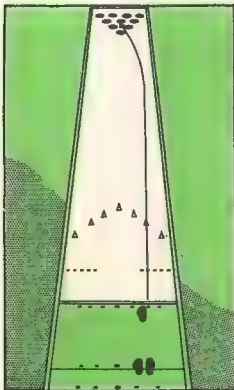
"What is the best angle for strikes?" I'm asked that question over and over again. Many bowlers feel there is some magical starting point that will help insure rolling the ball into the 1-3 pocket for a strike.

Actually, the best strike angle will vary according to the type of ball rolled and will also vary among individuals.

Here, for instance, we illustrate a fine strike angle for a bowler with a short hook ball. But a straight ball bowler will want to shoot more from the right corner to give him a better angle going into the 1-3 pocket.

A bowler with a bigger hook than we show will want to release the ball more from the center of the alley to allow his ball to roll out before hooking back into the pocket.

Each of these angles is a good strike angle, yet each differs from the other. They do have two things in common, however. First, they are all moving in toward the 5-pin when they hit the pins. And second, they all end up in the 1-3 pocket.



(21) YOU CAN CORRECT MISTAKES AT THE FOUL LINE

I've mentioned how a mistake early in your stance, footwork or armswing is bad because it generally breeds additional mistakes.

Yet, a good bowler can sometimes make such a mistake and recover from it. He can compensate for the error and still deliver the ball with pretty fair form.

But if his first mistake occurs in armswing or footwork at the foul line, he has no chance to recover from it. There's no time for him to adjust.

That's why you must concentrate on all phases of your footwork and armswing. You can't loaf at any time. You must finish as demonstrated by the bowler in this sketch, with the body facing your target and the right arm finishing up high and reaching out toward your target.

Your right foot may be more directly behind you, but that's a detail that will take care of itself. The right foot will tend to finish where it balances your body best.



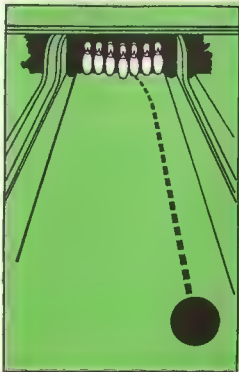
(22) ON EASY ALLEYS YOU STILL NEED STUFF ON THE BALL

Have you ever bowled on alleys that are running so much your ball practically walks right into the pocket? I mean you need put very little lift or turn on the ball to make it hook. Our sketch illustrates the path of such a ball.

When bowling on such running alleys, you need direction in order to score well. You must keep your ball on the right side of the headpin as the drawing demonstrates very well. Such running alleys often make the ball go into the nose too heavily or make it cross over to the left side of the headpin.

You should also make sure you put enough stuff on your ball so it won't flatten out and deflect when it strikes the pins. It must still drive in towards the 5-pin and generate proper pin action.

If you find putting the necessary stuff on your ball causes it to hook too much, move a board or two to the left to allow for the extra hooking action of the ball.



(23) NEW SHOES, BALL NEED BREAK-IN PERIOD

Whenever you purchase new bowling equipment—either shoes or a ball—I don't recommend your breaking them in during league play. It's just like wearing new shoes to a dance. You wouldn't care to do that.

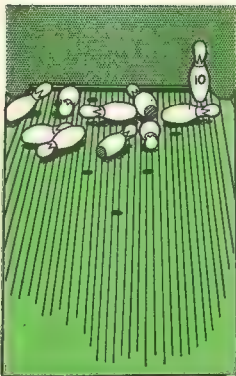
Bowling shoes need gradual breaking in. They're sometimes too stiff to be completely comfortable until they've been used a few times. Go out and practice with them. You might even wear them around the house a bit to make the leather more pliable.

A bowling ball, too, needs a period for breaking in. Even if the ball has been drilled exactly like your old ball, it will be strange to you for a while. The finger holes and thumb hole of a new ball are not worn down smooth, as those of an older ball.

Whenever I get a new black beauty, before using it in league or tournament play I wait until I've rolled at least 12 practice games with it, to see what it can do and how it feels.



(24) THAT PESKY 10-PIN



I'm sure every bowler has nights when he has 10-pin trouble. His first ball in each frame is hitting the pocket fairly consistently, but too many times the 10-pin refuses to fall, as illustrated in the sketch.

This can get very exasperating as well as hurt your scoring. And, if you miss a few 10-pins in shooting for spares, your whole game can come apart.

I try to figure out what's keeping the 10-pin up. Since I must depend upon pin action to knock down the 10, I know my ball is not setting up the proper pin action.

If my ball is a bit light in the pocket, I know I'm not setting up the proper pin action. So, I move a board or two to the right so the ball will go in a little heavier.

Even if my ball is going into the pocket solidly, I find moving a board or two to the right changes the angle from which the ball rolls into the pocket. This helps whenever that 10-pin keeps sticking on me. I recommend only a minor change, however. Just move one board or two. See if that doesn't help knock down that 10-pin.

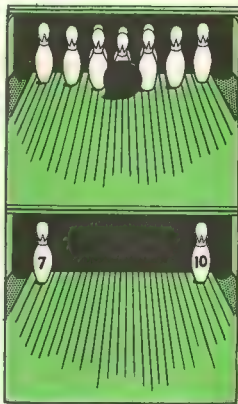
(25) GETTING TOO MANY SPLITS?

Are you bothered a great deal by those bad splits like the 7-10 shown here? I mean do you get several of them each game? If so, there's a way to avoid them.

Most bad splits come from nose hits, demonstrated in the upper drawing. The ball comes in too solidly on the nose, and the 7-10 or the 4-6-7-10 is the result.

It just takes a slight adjustment to change a nose hit into a pocket hit. A hook ball bowler should move a board to the left to see if that doesn't bring his ball away from the nose and into the pocket. Speeding up a hook ball will also cut down its hooking action and keep it off the nose.

A straight ball bowler may be releasing his ball in the middle of the alley and watching it roll down the middle and smack into the head-pin. If so, he should move over and release the ball nearer the right corner of the alley and angle it into the 1-3 pocket. Imagine you're aiming at the 5-pin, and try to roll the ball directly into the 5-pin from the right corner.



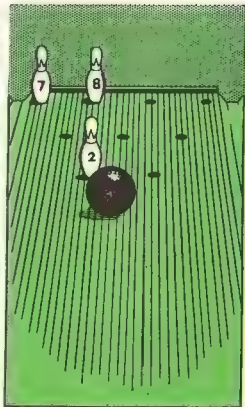
(26) HIT 2-PIN SOLIDLY ON RIGHT FOR THE 2-7-8 SPLIT

The 2-7-8 split we illustrate can be a very tough one for two reasons. First, there is a sleeper pin—the 8-pin—involved. Second, you must depend upon pin action to knock down the 7-pin.

Take your stance on the right side of the alley for this left-side split. Angle your ball so it goes into the 2-pin fairly solidly on the right side. The ball must continue on and into the 8-pin while the 2-pin must go back and into the 7.

There's danger here of striking the 2-pin too lightly on the right and having the ball deflect off and miss the 8. Such a light hit on the 2 can also chop it out to the left and into the gutter, so it misses the 7-pin entirely.

You can't aim the ball between the 2- and 7-pins for this split as you do for the 2-7 split. That will leave the 8-pin untouched. Make sure your ball goes into the 2-pin solidly on the right side to set up the proper pin action and ball action to get the spare.



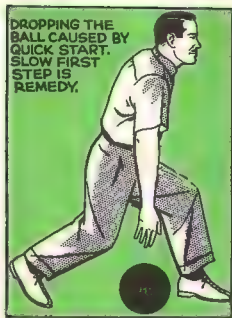
(27) DROPPING THE BALL CAN RESULT FROM TOO QUICK A START

If occasionally you drop your ball on the approach rather than send it out and over the foul line, the fault may merely come from perspiration—which makes your grip slippery.

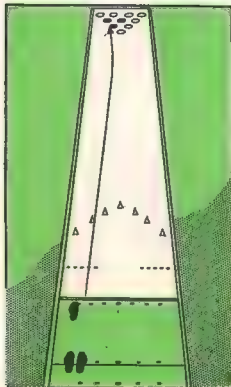
However, if this mistake becomes a fairly frequent habit, the fault lies somewhere else. It may be a faulty grip. Perhaps your span is too narrow, and your hand can't hold the ball firmly. Let an expert check your grip to see if you need a new one.

Another possible source of the trouble lies in bad timing. If your first step was too long and too fast, it's possible that your feet stayed ahead of your armswing throughout the approach. If so, your body probably arrived at the foul line before your arm was ready to deliver the ball. The resulting strain on the arm of swinging the ball through can cause you to drop the ball on the approach. We illustrate this in the sketch.

Cure for this trouble comes in taking a short, slow first step. Make sure your armswing is in perfect timing with your footwork as you take your first and each succeeding step.



(28) 2-4-5 SPARE CAN BE SHOT FROM TWO DIFFERENT ANGLES



Oftentimes, a bowler has a choice of angles in shooting for a spare. Such is the case with the 2-4-5 spare illustrated in this sketch.

Because this is a left-side spare, your regular rules for spare shooting indicate you should take your stance on the right side of the approach. You can move up and release the ball to the right of center, allowing your ball to hook into the 2-5 pocket. The 2-pin is thus knocked back and into the 4.

Yet, the drawing shows how you can shoot this spare from the left side, too, if you feel you have more confidence from that angle. The ball is released to the left-of-center and hooks slightly into the 2-4 pocket. The 2-pin, in this case, knocks over the 5.

From this same left-of-center angle the ball can hook into the 2-5 pocket and convert the spare, too. Most good hook ball bowlers use this angle, as it lessens the chance of chopping the 2-4 off the 5.

(29) BEGINNERS, TRY THE STRAIGHT BALL

Someone asked me which is better for the beginning bowler—the straight or the hook ball?

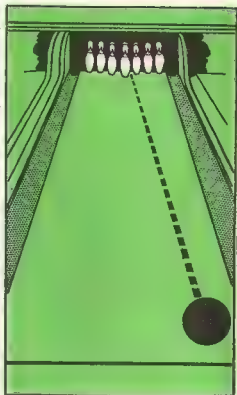
If you're a beginning bowler or one who's bowling in a league for the first time, concentrate on rolling the straight ball as we show here.

Draw an imaginary line from the 1-3 pocket back to the spot over which the ball will roll and try to make your ball follow that line. Our picture shows how to do this.

Too many beginners want to start with the more complicated hook or curve ball deliveries. This can cause serious trouble to the more basic fundamentals of footwork, armswing and timing.

A straight ball can be rolled with no concentration or trouble at all. Just keep the wrist firm as you deliver the ball and let it roll off your fingers, and your ball should roll fairly straight with very little hooking or back-up action.

The straight ball is easiest to control, too, so a beginner can get better scores, too, if he rolls such a ball. Once you have mastered the fundamentals and the straight ball, you can experiment with a hook or curve. But first-year bowlers should tackle the straight ball first, unless they have a natural hook without any effort.



(30) EXCESS BODY ENGLISH WON'T HELP YOU ROLL A HOOK

Rolling a hook ball becomes an obsession to many bowlers. They don't care if their scores improve, but they want to see their ball go down the alley and into the pins in a big hooking motion. They work so hard on the hook, they forget about other important aspects of their game.

The hook can result from a finger lift or a wrist turn or a combination of the two. But it should come with a minimum of body effort. Look at the sketch. The bowler there is applying a hook only through the lifting motion of his fingers. The thumb has come out of the ball, and the fingers are sending the ball out over the foul line as the armswing continues upward.

There's no strain on this bowler. He is in perfect balance. His timing is perfect, too. Obviously, if you intend to roll a hook, this is the way to go about it.



(31) HIPS DON'T MOVE OFF-LINE DURING APPROACH



Let's consider the hips. They should be on a parallel line, square to the target, in taking your stance and also at the finish.

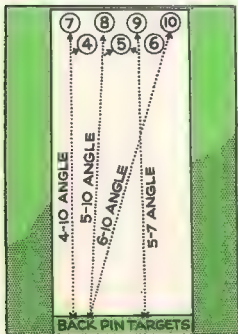
The hips, however, should *always* remain parallel even during the second and third steps. We show a bowler taking his third step with the ball at the top of the backswing. Even though his right shoulder is pulled back slightly off-line, his hips are still on a parallel line.

If the hips were to swing off-line during the approach, the entire body would be sideways. It would be very difficult to swing them back parallel for the remaining step-slide and delivery.

Keep the hips straight during your approach. Remember, they're the anchor to keep your body straight.

(32) HERE ARE YOUR STRAIGHT BALL ANGLES

This drawing shows a number of angles for a straight ball bowler who is shooting at various spares and splits. They are the 5-7, 5-10 and the 4-10 splits as well as the 6-10 spare.



The 4-10 split requires a delicate touch. The ball must strike the 4-pin lightly on the left to send it back and across into the 10. The same sort of touch is required for the 5-10 where the angle is not quite as acute. The 5-7 split should have the ball come in on the right side of the 5-pin to send it across and into the 7-pin.

It's possible to hit both pins with the ball in shooting for the 6-10 spare. I like to shoot this right-side spare from the left side, giving the ball as much room as possible. The ball is released to the left of center and angles across and into the right side of the 6-pin before continuing back and into the 10.

You'll note, too, from the sketch that the back four pins—the 7, 8, 9, 10—can all be shot from these same starting points. The only change I would make is to shoot the 7-pin more from the right side of the alley and angle the ball across the alley.

(33) WHEN A SLUMP HITS, CHECK YOUR FUNDAMENTALS

When you're in a bad bowling slump, the first thing to do is start to check the fundamentals of bowling. Check your footwork, armswing and timing.

Take them one at a time. First, work on the footwork. Walk through your approach without the ball as we illustrate. It's easier to analyze your game that way. Next, check your armswing. Are you keeping the arm close to the body? Are you maintaining a pendulum arc throughout the entire armswing? Are you following through properly? Finally, make sure your footwork and armswing are in good timing. They should be coordinated into one, smooth motion.

If possible, work with a qualified instructor. He can spot a mistake quicker than you can, and he can also tell you how to correct it.

A bowling slump is different from a cold streak. When you're in a slump, you aren't hitting the pocket very often, your ball is weak, your hook is inconsistent, you're missing easy spares. All these things indicate a slump.

Whatever your mistake, you should be able to find it somewhere—in your footwork, armswing or timing.



(34) THE FIRST STEP SHOULD BE COORDINATED WITH PUSH-AWAY

A bowler can suffer at the foul line for a mistake he committed in the first step of his approach. The mistake may not be apparent to him until after he releases the ball.

For instance, if his timing is bad in delivering the ball, it may be due to his push-away motion or his first step. If his right arm gets to the foul line too quickly for his feet, he can correct this with a slightly longer push-away motion as we illustrate. This will give him a slightly longer arc with the ball and will delay his armswing a bit.

On the other hand, if his feet arrive at the foul line before his armswing is ready to deliver the ball, it may be due to rushing his footwork. Perhaps he doesn't have his push-away motion and his first step coordinated properly. He can push the ball out just a bit quicker or he can reduce the length of his push-away motion to cut down a bit on his armswing.



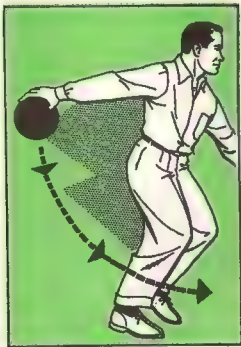
(35) ARMSWING IS SIMILAR TO PENDULUM

Although I call the backswing and forward return of the arm a pendulum swing, there are two basic differences between the swing of the arm in bowling and a true pendulum swing.

First, the *forward* swing of the arm is a bit faster than the backswing. This is natural as the swing is accelerated smoothly. The second phase of the swing (forward swing) is bound to be faster than the first phase (backswing). Because, as the speed of the footwork increases, the arm-swing will have to increase its speed to keep coordination.

Second, the forward swing of the arm is not a perfect pendulum movement. As the arm comes forward, it replaces the right leg at the foul line. The right leg is extended back and behind the bowler for both balance and braking effect.

My purpose in calling the armswing a pendulum motion is to impress you with its chief characteristics. The arm takes the ball straight back and starts it straight forward. In these respects, the armswing does resemble a pendulum swing. As the illustration shows, the arm is fully extended in the backswing as it is about to drop into the forward motion.



(36) IF YOU CAN'T FIGHT IT . . .



Do you have a major flaw in your bowling form? Perhaps you use only two steps in your approach. Or maybe your backswing is as high as the one you see in the sketch.

First thing you should do is try to eliminate the flaw. You'll certainly do better without it in your game.

If you've tried to work it out, however, and have failed, there is still hope for you. Many top bowlers today have some obvious error in their bowling styles, and they are still top-notchers.

Lou Campi, for instance, is a right-handed bowler who finishes on his right foot. Catherine Fellmeth, a former women's champion, had a backswing as high as that shown in the drawing. Patty Streibeck has one just as high. Don Carter has practically no backswing.

All of these stars became great bowlers *despite* their flaw rather than because of it. They found they could not eliminate it from their game without hurting overall effectiveness.

(37) HERE'S HOW TO RELAX WHILE BOWLING

As you've probably noticed, I believe quite strongly in relaxed bowling. I think relaxing not only help you enjoy the game more, but also helps you score better.

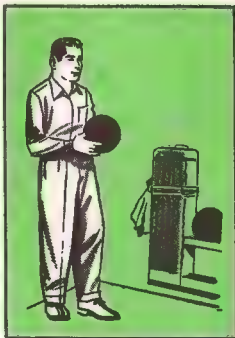
I've been bowling for many years and I don't think there is any sort of pressure in bowling that I haven't felt in tournament, match or league play.

My secret for relaxing is simple. I chew gum. I find chomping away on several sticks of gum is more relaxing than anything else I've tried.

Other bowlers will smoke a cigarette to let off tension while bowling. Some, like Walter Ward or Johnny King will chew on a cigar. This helps them to relax.

When you're out on the approach, stop, and take a deep breath before taking your stance. See if this, too, doesn't help relax you. Basketball players do it before shooting a free throw.

You may have methods of relaxing different from those I've mentioned, but by all means find some way to cut down the tension. You'll bowl better, and you'll enjoy the game more.



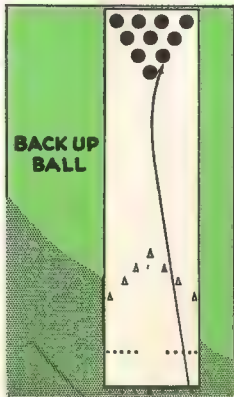
(38) KEEP THE WRIST FIRM AT RELEASE

Here's a fault of most beginners. And many women, even after considerable bowling experience, still roll the *back-up ball* because their wrist is so weak, that it naturally turns to the right as the ball is released. Also, it gets to be a habit.

The back-up ball, as you can see from our illustration, travels down the alley and fades to the right as it nears the pins. This is the worst type of ball for getting strikes, as the ball is moving *away from* the 1-3 strike pocket when it hits the pins. It should be moving *into* this 1-3 pocket and toward the 5-pin.

Best way to avoid rolling the back-up ball is to firm the wrist at delivery. Don't let the wrist or fingers turn to the right. A straight wrist at delivery with no finger lift should produce a fairly straight ball, which is recommended for beginners.

You might be tempted to use the back-up ball when you're shooting for the 10-pin in the right corner of the alley.



(39) CURVE BALL IS BEST STRIKE-GETTER

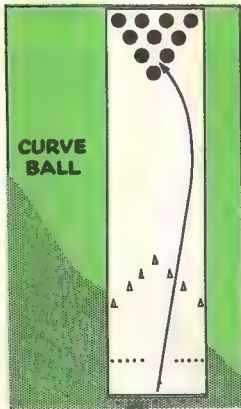
There's no question in my mind but what the curve ball is the best strike-getting delivery in bowling. The big trouble with the curve is controlling it.

Really, the curve ball is nothing more than a big, wide-sweeping hook. Because it hooks over such a wide portion of the alley, however, it becomes more difficult to control than the normal hook ball.

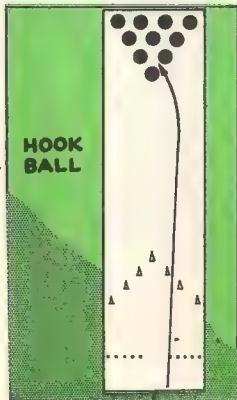
The curve ball, when it strikes the 1-3 pocket, is moving into the 5-pin at a better angle than the hook, straight or back-up ball.

Experts agree that the fewer boards a ball covers laterally, the easier it is to control. A glance at this illustration shows how the curve ball is released near the center of the alley, and moves out to the right before it curves back into the pins.

Bill Lillard is one of the best exponents of the curve ball among today's stars. It takes a great deal of finger lift and/or wrist turn to produce a curve ball, and it usually is a bit slower than a normal hook or straight ball to let the "stuff" take effect.



(40) HOOK BALL IS BEST FOR MOST BOWLERS



"Mr. Wilman, how can I roll a decent hook ball?" That's a question I think I hear more than any other at the Instruction Clinics I conduct throughout the country. Everyone wants to roll a hook ball. And I think the hook is the best overall delivery for most bowlers—but only if they've already mastered the fundamentals of footwork, armswing and timing. They should also have pretty good control before attempting the hook.

As you can see from the drawing, the hook is released between the center and the right corner of the alley. It rolls down the alley in a fairly straight line, but before it reaches the pins, the hooking action takes effect, and it moves into the pocket. It's a fine ball for strikes because of its angle going into the 1-3. It produces a great deal of necessary pin action.

For a consistent hook your delivery must be the same time after time. You might apply the same amount of "stuff" each time in releasing the ball, either with a finger lift, a wrist turn or a combination of the two.

(41) AIM STRAIGHT FOR THE PINS

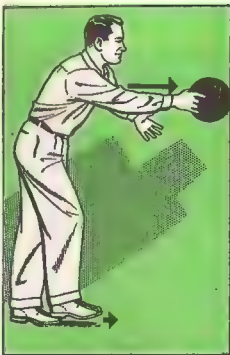
Let's discuss what happens with each step of the bowling approach. Here is the first step.

As you can see in the illustration, the first step is a short one, designed to get your body into motion easily. Too long a step here would make it very difficult to blend in the movements of the arms in the push-away.

As the right foot steps forward, the arms should be extended directly forward, pushing the ball straight out and away from the body. Push the ball directly toward the pins, your target. The ball will then fall easily into the backswing as gravity takes over.

The bowler's body is also bent slightly forward at the waist, and his left arm is stretched out for balance.

In the push-away, never push the ball up or down, to the left or to the right. ***ALWAYS PUSH IT STRAIGHT OUT IN FRONT OF YOU AND DIRECTLY AT THE PINS.*** The length of the push-away and the length of the first step should be approximately the same.



(42) WATCH YOUR TIMING

The second step in the four-step approach is a bit longer than the first, but it's still short of a normal stride. As the left foot comes forward in the second step, the ball has naturally dropped into the backswing. As shown in the drawing, it is passing the right leg as the second step is made.

A common mistake of bowlers is to rush this step. They're anxious to get up to the foul line and release the ball, I guess, but they should learn to coordinate throughout the entire approach. If either your footwork or your armswing is rushed at this point, your timing at the foul line will be destroyed.

Our bowler illustrated here continues to concentrate on the target with his eyes; his head, shoulders and hips are also facing forward. His right shoulder dips a bit, but this is normal from the weight of the ball. His shoulders are not pulled off-line—they continue to face forward.

From the form illustrated, you can't figure the armswing will be straight back. If the right elbow were allowed to swing out away from the body, chances are the backswing would be crooked. But keeping the elbow in fairly close to the body assures a straight armswing.



(43) DON'T LET YOUR BACKSWING GET TOO HIGH

Now we have reached the top of the backswing as the bowler takes the third step with the right foot. The ball, at this point, should not be more than shoulder height.

One of the most common mistakes *any* bowler makes is letting his backswing get away from him at this point. In trying for extra speed many bowlers will bring the ball back higher than we show in our drawing. The extra speed they gain is more than offset, however, by the damage done to their timing. The speed itself may be bad, too, as it may prevent a normal hooking action. I am not against a fast ball, but it should not be obtained by allowing the backswing to come back above shoulder height.

Ed Lubanski has a style very similar to the one illustrated. Most good bowlers have generally the same form. The eyes, as shown, are still on the target. The head and hips face forward. The shoulders will stay square to the target as he delivers the ball.

Everything is set for the bowler to bring his right arm and his left leg forward for the final step and the delivery of the ball.



(44) HERE'S THE FINAL STEP IN FOOTWORK

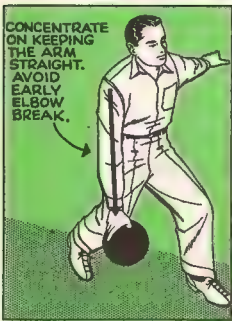
We show fine form in the drawing here, illustrating the fourth and final step. The right arm and left leg are coming forward in perfect timing. The right arm is straight and fully extended while left arm is used for balance.

Note how both knees are bent slightly. This allows the bowler to bring the ball forward in an arc just above the level of the alley bed. With the left knee bent slightly, the bowler also helps cushion his slide and stop just short of the foul line. It acts as a sort of shock absorber.

Check the bowler's head, shoulders, hips and feet. They are all facing his target directly. This means his armswing has been straight back and straight forward, and he hasn't permitted his body to swerve off-line during his approach.

His eyes, too, are concentrating on his target either the pins or a spot out on the alley.

The right arm should be fully extended, but not tense or locked. A little relaxation is necessary.



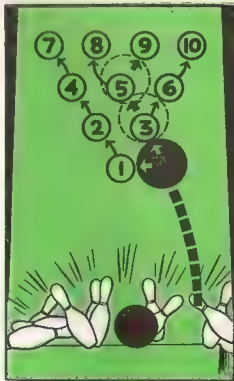
(45) WHAT HAPPENS ON A PERFECT STRIKE

Ever know what happens to each pin on a perfect strike? I'll bet you don't, but knowing this can help you understand how a 5-pin or a 4-pin can be left on a hit that looked pretty good from 60 feet away. Check our drawing as I describe what happens on a perfect 1-3 pocket hit.

First, the ball strikes the 1-pin and the 3-pin solidly, knocking them over. The ball continues on, striking the 5-pin on the right side and then deflecting off to the right and into the 9-pin. The 5-pin is knocked into the 8-pin, and this clears out the middle of the alley.

When the ball rolls into the 1-3 pocket, it starts a reaction. The 1-pin is knocked into the 2, and the 2 goes into the 4 which goes back into the 7-pin. Likewise, the 3-pin is knocked into the 6 which is knocked into the 10-pin, completing the cycle.

So you can easily see why a weak hit in the 1-3 pocket will often deflect to the right, leaving the 5-pin untouched. Also, a heavy hit on the nose will not set up the proper pin action. And pin action is necessary because the ball itself only knocks over four of the pins. It must depend upon pin action to take care of the other six.



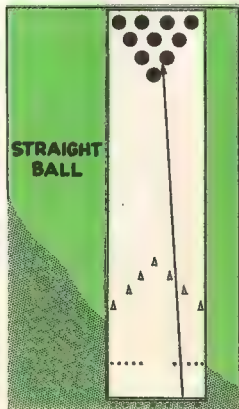
(46) TRY THE STRAIGHT BALL FIRST

Here we illustrate the ball most beginning bowlers roll. It's a straight ball, and you can see how it follows a straight path from the foul line where it is released into the pins.

The straight ball is rolled by releasing the ball with no finger lift and no wrist turn. If you want to use it, just let the ball roll off your fingers. Don't make any attempt to lift it or turn it.

The straight ball can be effective for strikes if it's rolled from the right corner of the alley into the 1-3 pocket. That will give the ball enough angle to carry.

Once the beginner has good control of the straight ball, he or she can move on to the more complicated deliveries. In some cases, a right-handed beginning bowler will have a natural hook. He should continue to roll the hook without bothering about the straight ball.



(47) SHOULD A LEFT-HANDER SWITCH BOWLING STYLES?

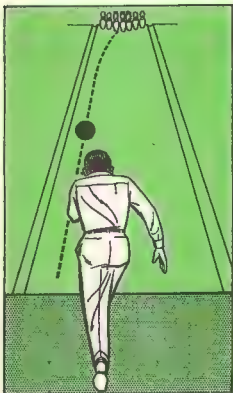
If you're a left-handed bowler and are wondering if you should switch over to the right-handed style, let me list a few of the advantages and disadvantages of continuing as a southpaw.

Almost every left-handed bowler I've seen has a natural, easy hook ball. That's something a right-hander works many long hours to develop, so a southpaw is that much ahead. If he can control his hook, he has quite a head start on becoming a good bowler.

On the other hand, a left-hander rolls his ball down the left side of the alley. Because there are many more right-handers shooting down the right side of the alley, the oil or dressing on the right side wears off much sooner than on the left.

A southpaw can't learn how an alley is working by watching his teammates unless there is another lefty or two on his team. One right-hander can learn a lot by watching other right-handers and seeing how their balls react to alley conditions.

I'd never advise a southpaw to change, however, unless his style was very poor and his control bad.



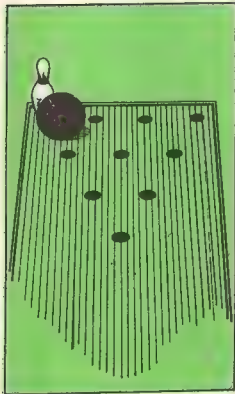
(48) SHOOT THE 7-PIN FROM THE RIGHT

Most right-handed bowlers have little trouble converting the 7-pin spare we show in our illustration.

I like to give myself all the alley angle I can on this shot. I take my stance on the right side of the approach, releasing my ball on the right side of the alley.

The ball is angled across the alley from the right side to the left corner. A hook ball should hook right into the 7-pin without too much trouble.

The danger of missing this shot usually comes from using too sharp an angle, which will cause your ball to hook across the pin and into the left gutter before it reaches the pin. Or, if you don't use enough angle, your ball will move straight down the alley, then hook to the left but not far enough to reach the pin. When you're shooting at the 7-pin, just remember that it's approximately 36 inches farther from the bowler than the 1-pin. This means the ball has about 3 feet more distance to travel.



(49) AVOID ARM STRAIN — HERE'S HOW

In teaching students the finer points of bowling, I always emphasize the importance of *natural speed*. Forcing extra speed or forcing any other part of your bowling game can only result in poor timing and often in tired, strained muscles.

The right arm, for instance, should deliver the ball as we show in this drawing—with no strain or effort. Keeping the right arm relaxed may sound difficult when you consider that it's swinging a 16-pound ball. Actually it's easy. Let the arm swing back and forth naturally with the ball. The weight of the ball and the push-away motion will give you initial momentum. Just avoid forcing the arm at any point of the armswing or delivery.

Another tip for avoiding strain on your bowling arm or hand is to cradle the ball in your left palm before starting the approach. Don't support the ball with your bowling hand.

You'll enjoy bowling more if you avoid straining. If you catch yourself committing this fault, check your footwork and your armswing for smoothness and coordination.



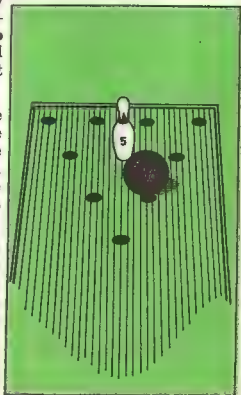
(50) ROLL A STRIKE FOR THE 5-PIN SPARE

In shooting for the 5-pin, I usually take my normal strike stance. Any ball that would normally roll into the 1-3 strike pocket is a cinch to knock over the 5-pin. In fact, if your first ball had hit the 1-3 pocket more solidly, you wouldn't have left the 5-pin in the first place.

This 5-pin spare can also be played from the middle-of-the-alley angle. The ball should be released a bit to the right of the middle of the alley to allow it to hook back and into the 5-pin as shown in the drawing. Just how much to the right will depend upon the individual bowler's hook and the alley conditions.

A straight ball bowler can shoot this spare straight down the center if he wishes. Or, he may prefer to use his normal strike ball angle and shoot it from the right side. Because of his familiarity with this strike angle, this might be best for him.

If your delivery is consistent, you shouldn't have much trouble hitting this single pin in the middle of the alley.



(51) TWO WAYS TO ROLL A HOOK

Rolling a hook ball is very important to most bowlers. Below are two methods:

1. A follow-through method with no wrist turn—I call it the “hand-shaking hook,” because the hand is in the hand-shaking position on the ball. As the bowler looks down, he can see his thumb in the 9 o’clock position, and his fingers at 3 o’clock. As he delivers the ball, the bowler applies no wrist turn, but he does follow through completely. The thumb comes out of the ball first, and the fingers give the ball a natural spin because they’re on the side, as our illustration shows. This natural spin will cause the ball to hook as it nears the pins.

2. A bowler can develop a strong rolling hook by placing his thumb in the 11 o’clock position, which will place his fingers in about the 5 o’clock spot. The hand is then directly behind and slightly under the ball. There is no wrist turn in this delivery either, but the strong finger lift and follow-through will give the ball plenty of natural spin and hooking action.



(52) THE HOOK, TWO MORE WAYS

I've discussed two ways to roll a hook, using nothing but finger lift. Below are two additional methods:



1. A hook will result if the bowler turns his wrist from right to left just as he delivers the ball. This turning of the wrist will give a similar right-to-left spinning motion to the ball, which will cause it to break to the left when it nears the pins. We depict this wrist turn in the drawing. The spinning motion won't take effect until the ball is further down the alley. Then, the spinning action overcomes the ball's momentum and causes the ball to hook. Be sure you turn only the wrist—not the whole arm or shoulder.

2. The fourth way to roll a hook ball is through a combination finger-lift and wrist-turn. The thumb is in the 12 o'clock position, and the fingers are at 6 o'clock. The palm is directly behind the ball. Just as the ball passes the left foot in delivery, the fingers apply lift, then the wrist turns from right to left. Because this combination lift and turn requires a delicate touch, I don't recommend it for any except the advanced bowler, or the bowler who does a lot of practicing.

(53) FOLLOW-THROUGH IS GOOD INSURANCE

In instructing a class on bowling fundamentals, I can always count on someone questioning the importance of the follow through. "Once I let go of the ball, there's nothing I can do to help it, so why bother about following through?"

He's partially right too. There *is nothing* he can do once he releases the ball. But if he did not follow through properly and stopped his armswing as soon as the ball was released, he'd find himself often stopping his armswing, or slowing it down, *before* he released the ball.

The result would be dumping the ball on the alley—or even on the approach—with no stuff on it to cause it to hook. The only way to insure proper finger lift or wrist turn is to continue the motion after the ball is released. The follow-through, then, is a sort of insurance policy against dumping the ball.

The follow-through should continue until the hand is about head-high in front of you, as you see in our drawing. I describe the follow-through as reaching out to shake hands with the target.



(54) KEEP RECORDS — CORRECT YOUR MISTAKES

If you want to discover your most frequent mistakes, keep an accurate record. Why not? Jot down each spare you miss, or each split you draw, or any other mistake you make. Then check back over the past three or four weeks' mistakes to see which occurred most frequently.

You may find, for instance, that you missed the 10-pin time after time. If so, get some practice, such as the bowler in the illustration is getting.

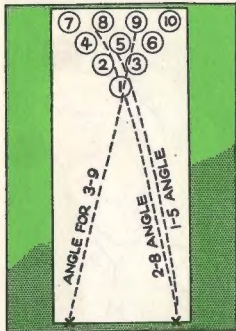
It would also help to jot down the pins you leave on your first ball in each frame. If you consistently cross over and leave the 5-9, you should work on control to keep your ball on the right side of the headpin.

Another helpful tip is to keep your scores each week. Check to see if one game (first, second or third) is consistently lower than the others. You may learn that you run out of gas in the third game. Or, you may discover that your first game is usually your worst. If so, a little warm-up might be what you need.



(55) "SLEEPER PINS" ARE RISKY

"Sleeper pins" are those pins directly behind another pin and usually difficult to see from the bowler's end of the alley. The 8-pin behind the 2-pin, for instance, is a "sleeper." The same thing can be said for the 9 behind the 3, or the 5 behind the 1.



Unless a bowler realizes the "sleeper" pin is there, it's very easy for him to knock down the front pin and leave the "sleeper" untouched. That's why the proper angle is important in shooting for such a spare, plus good control of the ball.

Here we illustrate the best angles for shooting the three "sleepers." Because your ball will deflect after hitting the front pin, make sure you hit the pin solidly enough so your ball continues to roll on and into the "sleeper" pin.

The angle shown for the 3-9 is for a straight ball bowler. A hook ball should roll out a bit more to the right before coming back solidly on the 3-pin. Both the 1-5 and the 2-8 angles are for hook ball or straight ball bowlers. But make sure your ball strikes the front pin solidly enough to prevent the ball from deflecting off and missing the "sleeper" pin.

(56) DON'T MAKE YOUR BACKSWING TOO HIGH OR CROOKED

Many bowlers commit two common errors in the backswing. They are:

1. Bringing the ball back in a crooked path, as shown in our drawing.
2. Bringing the ball back too high.

These two errors often occur together, although not necessarily. A bowler who's rushing his arm-swing or trying to force extra power into his delivery will probably commit both mistakes.

Keeping the right elbow in fairly close to the body while executing the armswing will help avoid taking the ball back out of line. If the right elbow swings out too wide, the ball will follow a similar path. If the elbow is kept in close to the body, however, the ball should remain in a straight path through the backswing.

One way to avoid too high a backswing is to concentrate on keeping it no higher than your shoulder. Our illustrated bowler shows the maximum height for a backswing



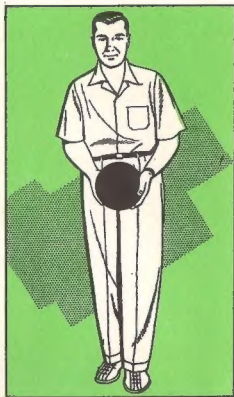
(57) TAKE YOUR STANCE . . . THEN CONCENTRATE!

Perfect bowling form is shown in this drawing. The bowler in the stance position is relaxed and comfortable, his weight evenly divided between his feet. His left hand supports the ball's weight, and his body is squared away to his target.

But the thing I'd like to emphasize about this bowler is his concentration. He's looking directly at his target. His mind is completely devoted to the task at hand. Already sure what angle he's going to use, he isn't bothered by outside distractions.

A beginning bowler should pay particular attention to concentration at this point. Once the approach is begun, concentration is pretty easy. But before taking the first step, a bowler may be easily distracted by action on other alleys or comments from his teammates.

If a bowler learns correctly, these habits stay with him and become automatic. That's why I recommend such complete concentration in the stance position.



(58) DON'T TIGHTEN UP ON THE FIRST BALL

Whenever I teach a class of student bowlers, I'm amazed at how much more accurate their second ball is than their first. The first ball might miss the pocket by a wide margin and leave four or five pins to pick up; but the second ball is right on the target to convert the pins for a spare.

The wildness on the first ball in a frame comes partly, I think, from trying too hard. The bowler sees all 10 pins which must be knocked down, so he gets tense. He tries to get a lot of stuff on the ball, and he tenses up a bit more.

What's the solution? Try relaxing! If you get your ball into the 1-3 pocket, you have a fine chance for a strike. So, why not concentrate only on that? Pretend that the 1 and 3 pins are the only ones up, and try to knock them down. Don't worry about the other 8 pins.

Relax, and get that first ball into the 1-3 pocket as the drawing shows. Relaxing and concentrating on just those two pins should prevent the tightening up which hits too many bowlers on their first ball in each frame.

